DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 451 563 CS 510 531

AUTHOR Cantrell, Ayne
TITLE Crossing Institutional Boundaries: Defining the Collaborative Project.
PUB DATE 2001-03-15
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (52nd, Denver, CO, March 14-17, 2001). For other papers from the Collaborative project, see CS 510 532-34.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Cooperation; *Freshman Composition; Higher Education; *Portfolio Assessment; *Writing Assignments; *Writing Teachers
IDENTIFIERS Middle Tennessee State University

ABSTRACT

In 1994, the situation of one writing teacher changed when she joined others at her institution to collaborate on the design and follow through of the Portfolio Composition Program for first-year writing students. Today, the collaboration continues as volunteer full-time faculty, graduate teaching assistants, and other part-time teachers try out the same writing assignments, gather at workshops to practice portfolio assessment, and serve on teams to assess the writing of each other's students. The collaborative nature of the program at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) gave birth, in part, to the project that will be described and evaluated in this panel presentation. Even though the four presenters now teach at three different institutions, all have ties to the MTSU's Portfolio Composition Program. This paper describes how these writing teachers explored ways to continue to collaborate across institutional boundaries, motivated by a desire to expand their students' writing community and knowledge of each other. The paper takes the collaborators step-by-step through the project, which 87 students at the three schools started; the students also contributed essays to the Web site, which they named "Not Shakespeare But It Will Do: Campus and Community Profiles by Tennessee College and University Students." Appended are an essay assignment and related material. (NKA)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 451 563

Crossing Institutional Boundaries: Defining the Collaborative Project.

by Ayne Cantrell

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
A. Cantrell
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CS 510 531

Collaborative Teaching, Collaborative Learning: Expanding Communities of Writing Teachers and Students Cross Institutional Boundaries

Conference on College Compostion and Commuication

Denver, Colorado

15 March 2001

I. Crossing Institutional Boundaries: Defining the Collaborative Project

Ayne Cantrell

Teaching writing is often a lonely act. Teachers spend hours in isolation choosing textbooks, making out lesson plans and writing assignments, and, of course, marking papers. For most of my twenty-five years of teaching writing, I worked in isolation. Given a few departmental guidelines, including a list of composition standards and the required number and length of essays students were to write, I taught writing with little knowledge of what my colleagues were doing in their classes; we rarely talked about the teaching of writing--except for complaining about students, of course. In 1994, however, my situation as a writing teacher changed when I joined others at my institution to collaborate on the design and follow through of the Portfolio Composition Program for first-year writing students. Today, the collaboration continues as volunteer full-time faculty, Graduate Teaching Assistants, and other part-time teachers try out the same writing assignments, gather at workshops to practice portfolio assessment, and serve on teams to assess the writing of each other's students.

The collaborative nature of the Portfolio Composition Program at Middle Tennessee State University gave birth, in part, to the project that Maria Clayton (Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro), Ray Legg (Bryan College, Dayton, Tennessee) and Julie Lumpkins (Columbia State Community College, Columbia, Tennessee), and I (also from Middle Tennessee State University) will describe and evaluate in this panel presentation entitled "Collaborative Teaching, Collaborative Learning: Expanding Communities of Writing Teachers and Students Cross Institutional Boundaries." Even though we now teach at three different institutions, we all have ties to the MTSU's Portfolio Composition Program where we first experienced the joys and challenges of collaborative teaching and collaborative learning.

In the Spring Semester of 2000, Professors Clayton, Legg, Lumpkins, and I met via e-mail to

explore ways that we could continue to collaborate, but this time across institutional boundaries. We expected that our collaboration would benefit us as teachers. How would it benefit our students? Already in our individual classrooms, students worked in peer groups to respond to their works in progress. What if we asked that they collaborate with first-semester writing students at other, quite different, institutions of higher learning in Tennessee? Since we were all teaching first-semester composition in Fall 2000, we decided to ask our students to write the same essay assignment and to share that writing via e-mail with peer readers at our institutions--Bryan College (a four-year private college of 900 students), Columbia State Community College (two-year public, 4300 students), and Middle Tennessee State University (four-year public, 19,000 students). We were motivated by a desire expand our students' writing community and knowledge of each other. We set out to answer these questions:

- What common perceptions about public/private, two-year/four-year institutions of higher learning exist among writing teachers and students and will collaboration cross institutional boundaries change these perceptions?
- Will writing to students at other college campuses make the concept of audience more real to our students, thereby increasing their awareness of and adaptation to audience in their writing?
- What common writing strengths/weaknesses exist among students at these institutions? What differences exist?

Over the summer we met face-to-face to collaborate on the writing assignment, to establish deadlines that would work for our different schedules and to assign project tasks. This meeting gave shape to the collaboration, but it was only after countless e-mails (at least 75) that the details for the project were ironed out.

We introduced our students to the writing assignment during the eighth week of the semester. It would be the third essay they would write (See Appendix 1 for the Essay 3 Assignment, WRITING A PROFILE: A Collaborative Project for Internet Publication). The assignment asked students to create a profile essay, which would be included in a collection of essays published on a web site in collaboration with students from the three schools. More specifically, the assignment gave students two topic options.

Students could either (1) profile a campus program, publication, service, or club, or place or (2) profile a place or activity in their campus community. Each of us suggested topics for the profile, although students were not required to choose from these, and many did not. For example, one of my students chose to profile a tattoo pallor. Our assignment also identified audience, purpose, and writer's role:

> **AUDIENCE/PURPOSE:** Since your essay will be published in a collection posted on the Internet, anyone around the globe could read your essay, including future students for your institution. However, we ask that more specifically you target readers at our three colleges. We are using the collection of essays to learn about each other and our colleges; therefore, the general purpose of your profile is to inform. Please assume that your target readers are first-year college students at Bryan College, Columbia State Community College, and Middle Tennessee State University who are unfamiliar with the subject of your profile.
>
> **WRITER'S ROLE:** You will write in the role of an informed college student, a knowledgeable ambassador for your college and campus community.

Students were to make at least one observation visit and to conduct an interview of at least one knowledgeable individual. In addition, they were to

- ✓ Target and adapt to an appropriate audience
- ✓ Have a unified angle of vision for the profile expressed as a thesis
- ✓ Present the profile with adequate interesting detail
- ✓ Organize material as a logical extension of the thesis
- ✓ Avoid overt persuasion
- ✓ Use correct and appropriate language

The assignment also outlined steps for following through with the electronic peer group and designated due dates for activities over the course of the seven weeks that it took to complete the assignment.

Before the writing assignment was introduced, students completed an Institutional Perceptions Questionnaire that elicited their knowledge and impressions of the three types of institutions involved in the project--a large public university, a small private college, and a two-year community college. Also during the eighth week of the semester, we established cross-institutional peer groups for the students (students

were placed in groups of three or four, each group consisting of a student each from Bryan and Columbia State and one or two students from MTSU; we tried to stack the groups with students of varying writing skill so that there would be at least one strong writer in each group).

In the tenth week, students shared a coversheet and draft 2 of the essay with their peer groups via e-mail and gave each other feedback. The coversheet asked students to identify the rhetorical context of their writing, including audience, purpose, and writer's role (See Appendix 2 for the essay coversheet assignment). Using the feedback from their peers, students revised their coversheets and wrote draft 3, which they submitted to their teachers during the eleventh week of the semester; teachers returned this coversheet and draft with additional feedback the next week. The revised and edited fourth draft for the essay web site collection was collected in the fifteenth week of the semester.

During the completion of the assignment, students wrote a reflective piece on the collaborative experience and responded to a post Institutional Perceptions Questionnaire. Also we teachers kept a journal reflecting on our experiences.

A total of eighty-seven (87) students at the three schools started the project. Seventy-seven (77) completed the project and contributed essays to the web site, which the students named *Not Shakespeare But It Will Do: Campus and Community Profiles by Tennessee College and University Students*. The web site address is <http://www.mtsu.edu/~mclayton/Studentcomps>. The collection contains an introduction to the web site, brief introductions to our schools (these introductions are teacher/student collaborations), and the essays themselves. Visitors to the site may read about subjects as varied as Betty's Parkway Steak House, a family owned restaurant in Columbia, Tennessee ("Betty's has a country, everybody is welcome attitude," says the writer); MTSU's Office of Student Health Services (an essay entitled "Need a Band-Aid?"), and the Scopes Trial Museum, which is located in the basement of the Rhea County Courthouse in Dayton, Tennessee, where in 1925 William Jennings Bryan prosecuted John Thomas Scopes , a high school biology teacher, for teaching the theory of evolution.

With this description of our collaboration as a backdrop, now my colleagues will answer the three questions posed by the project. In "Crossing Institutional Boundaries: Changing Common Perceptions," Maria Clayton will discuss the students' pre- and post-attitudes about students at the other campuses and

will attempt to define how the collaboration may have produced attitudinal changes. In "Crossing Institutional Boundaries: Making Audience Real," Ray Legg will evaluate audience awareness and adaptation in the essays. In "Crossing Institutional Boundaries: Identifying Writing Strengths and Weaknesses," Julie Lumpkins will assess the common strengths and weaknesses of the student writing and identify differences among the students' writing facility.

Appendix 1

ESSAY 3 ASSIGNMENT: WRITING A PROFILE
A Collaborative Project for Internet Publication

Congratulations! Your portfolio composition class has been selected to participate in a collaborative writing project for students from Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee (a private four-year non-denominational, Protest, evangelical institution of 500+ students), Columbia State Community College in Columbia, Tennessee (a public two-year college of 4,300 students), and Middle Tennessee State University (a public four-year institution of nearly 19,000 students). Your teachers--Professors Raymond Legg (Bryan), Julie Lumpkins (Columbia State), and Maria Clayton and Ayne Cantrell (Middle Tennessee State)--have been collaborating since May to create a challenging assignment that will expand our writing communities and further develop our ability to analyze and to adapt to targeted audiences. Our goal is to put together a collection of essays that profiles places and activities for students at our three colleges and to publish them on a web site that you will name.

TOPIC: Now that you have had several weeks to adjust to your new role as a college student, it is time to explore what your college and the surrounding community has to offer its students and to share that newfound knowledge with others in an informative essay of 550 to 650 words. You may choose one of two options:

- A profile of a campus program, publication, service, club, or place (or people for Bryan College students)
- A profile of a place or activity in your campus community

SUGGESTED TOPICS : What follows are suggested topics for the assignment listed for each college. You may choose one of these or one not listed as long as it is approved by your teacher.

BRYAN COLLEGE--People around campus: Interesting people you know, Office of Student Life, Residence Assistants, Team coaches, Bible Education Ministry (BEM), Pals (Big Brother/Sister), Break for Change, etc. Places around campus: Rhea County Courthouse, Scopes Trial Museum, Trail of Tears, Fall Creek Falls State Park, local tourist attractions, Tennessee Aquarium, Tivoli Theatre, Pocket Wilderness, Fort Bluff, Cumberland Springs, the Homesteads at Crossville, etc.

COLUMBIA STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE--On-campus programs/publications: Developmental Studies, Perceptions, Drama, Nursing, Vet Tech, Portfolio Composition, Radiology Tech, Respiratory Care, EMT. On-campus student organizations: Baptist Student Union, Circle K Club, Columbia State Aggies, computer Club, Gamma Beta Phi, Geste, Student Ambassadors, Student chapter of the International Association of Administrative Professionals Student Chapter, North American Veterinary Technician Association, Student Tennessee Education Association. On-campus services: The Counseling and Testing Department, The Advising Center, The Career Resource Center, The health Services Office, The Academic Services Office, Learning Resources Center, The Learning Center. On-campus places: Student Center, bookstore, a campus eatery, Hickman Humanities Building, The Collegiate Center. Places in the Columbia community: James K. Polk Home, Rattle and Snap, Rippavilla, Mt. Pleasant Phosphate Museum, Lumpy's Malt Shop, Betty's Parkway, Saturn, Sam Hill's, Maury County Arts Guild, St. John's Episcopal Church.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY--On-campus programs/publications: Women's Studies, African American Studies, The Honors Program, The Debate Program, Cooperative Education, Developmental Studies, International Programs & Services, *Collage*, *Sidelines*. Campus clubs: Womyn's Political Action Group, Drama Club, Lambda Association, Dance Club, Biology Club, Chinese Student Association, Flying Raiders, a club sport (like men's or women's rugby). On-Campus Services: June Anderson Women's Center, Disabled Student Services, The Day Care Center, JSA Foundation Scholarships, The Writing Center, the escort service, Counseling and Testing Center, Project Help, Math or Reading Lab, The Adult Services Center, Japan Center of Tennessee, Placement & Student Employment. On-campus places: Center for Popular Music, Married Student Housing, Center of Historic Preservation, Student Recreation Center, Art Barn Gallery, The Learning Resources Center, Computer Labs, a campus eatery, Phillips Bookstore, Multi-Cultural Affairs, Tennessee Livestock Center, Tennessee Folklore

Society. Chairs of Excellence: Dyslexic Studies, Free Enterprise, First Amendment Studies, Manufacturing Excellence, Nursing. Places in the Murfreesboro community: Stones River Battlefield, The Greenway, Murfreesboro Ensemble Theatre, Murfreesboro Arts Center, Shoeless Joe's Sports Bar, Main Street, The Front Porch Restaurant.

AUDIENCE/PURPOSE: Since your essay will be published in a collection posted on the Internet, anyone around the globe could read your essay, including future students for your institution. However, we ask that you more specifically target readers at our three colleges. We are using the collection of essays to learn about each other and our colleges; therefore, the general purpose of your profile is to inform. Please assume that your target readers are first-year college students at Bryan College, Columbia State Community College, and Middle Tennessee State University who are unfamiliar with the subject of your profile.

WRITER'S ROLE: You will write in the role of an informed college student, a knowledgeable ambassador for your college and campus community.

RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS:

1. Narrow your subject to a manageable topic. For example, if your campus has a student recreation center, you may not be able to adequately profile all of its services in a 650 word article, but you could cover one aspect, such as the weight room. It is better to go into depth on a specific service the program offers than to cover everything about the program.
2. Whenever appropriate, make at least one observational visit, taking notes on your observations and writing them up.
3. Interview at least one knowledgeable individual and, when available, collect descriptive materials, such as pamphlets or newsletters, to gather information about the subject. ***The first interview must be in person, not via telephone.***
4. Quote the interviewee at least once in the essay.
5. Acknowledge sources using MLA documentation style by (a) including a Works Cited page and (b) quoting and paraphrasing your sources appropriately in your essay. ***Note: Draft 2, the peer draft that you will share via e-mail does not have to be MLA formatted.***
6. You must submit notes from interview and copies of any printed materials collected for this essay with
   Draft 3.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

1. Do not refer to the interview in the essay, such as "She said in the interview. . . ."
2. Do not refer to yourself as the interviewer in the essay, such as "When I asked him. . . ."
3. Do not present a hodgepodge of unrelated information about your subject. Do have an "angle" for your profile. Your goal is to create an interesting focus for your profile. Your angle/focus will be expressed as a thesis, a central, overriding idea to which everything in your essay relates.

EVALUATION CRITERIA: Besides meeting the requirements outlined above, a successful profile essay will

- ✓ Target and adapt to an appropriate audience
- ✓ Have a unified angle of vision for the profile expressed as a thesis
- ✓ Present the profile with adequate interesting detail
- ✓ Organize material as a logical extension of the thesis
- ✓ Avoid overt persuasion
- ✓ Use correct and appropriate language

PEER RESPONSE GROUP: For this assignment you will work with an assigned group of students from our three colleges. This group of students will serve as your critical readers in the same way that your in-class peer group has done for the first two essays. You will share draft 2 with them via e-mail and in return they will ask you to read and respond to their essays. *Follow the instructions for peer response work given on the next page and be sure to meet all deadlines set on your class schedule:*

STEPS FOR PEER GROUP RESPONSE:

1. Make initial e-mail contact once you have been assigned your peer group and given e-mail addresses:
    a. Start your e-mail program and in the address line, insert the e-mail addresses for the members of your peer group. (You may want to create a distribution list .)
    b. Copy "cc" your teacher.
    c. Send an introductory message to all peers
    d. Share some personal information (age, major, hometown, hobbies, and the like) and give your topic idea for the essay.
2. Share coversheet and draft 2 of Essay 3 with your peer group via e-mail.
    a. Complete the coversheet and draft 2 of Essay 3 and save the document using your last name and college initials as the file name (i.e.: doemtsu). If there are several students with the same last name in your class, include as part of the file name your initials (i.e.: doejrmtsu).
    b. Start your e-mail program and in the address line, insert the e-mail addresses for the members of your peer group.
    c. In the subject line write your *name and essay 3.*
    d. Copy "cc" your teacher.
    e. For the body of the message
        1. You may want to write a word of greeting or explanation to your readers.
        2. Then send your coversheet and draft 2 of Essay 3 <u>either as an attachment</u> (With *Microsoft Outlook* you attach files by clicking on the paper clip icon on the tool bar, browsing your documents for the desired file, and double-clicking the file name; with *Netscape Messenger* you select "attach" first), <u>or by copy and paste</u> into e-mail from your Word document.
3. Respond to your peers' coversheets and essays, answering the questions on page 4 of this handout.
4. Get suggestions from your peer group for names for the web site and nominate one name for your group. Then, students from all three colleges will select the name from peer group nominations.

TASKS AND DUE DATES: Because this assignment requires you to schedule and conduct an interview and work with an off-campus peer group via e-mail, you should start working on the assignment immediately. Your teacher will set specific dates (consult your class schedule) following these time lines:

<u>October 09-13</u>
The writing assignment is distributed and discussed.
Peer groups are assigned.
Peer groups establish contact.
Students submit topic choice, name/qualifications of person to be interviewed, and at least five interview questions.
<u>October 23-27</u>
Interview must be completed.
Students submit invention writing and draft 1.
Students submit coversheet and draft 2 for peer group via e-mail.
Peer groups respond to essays via e-mail.
<u>October 30-November 03</u>
Students submit coversheet and draft 3 to teacher.
Students complete questionnaire and reflective writing on collaborative project in class.
Peer groups nominate names for web site and all students vote to select winning name.
<u>November 06-10</u>
Teachers return draft 3 with comments for revision.
<u>November 27-December 01</u>
Students submit draft 4, the final revised essay (hard and disk copies) for publication. Please follow these submission requirements:

1. Three hard copies of the essay with coversheet
2. One copy of essay only (no coversheet) in Word format on 3.5" floppy disk with the file name: Last name, initials, college name (i.e.:doejrmtsu)

ESSAY 3 PEER RESPONSE QUESTIONS FOR E-MAIL REPLY

***Instructions*: (1) Read all your peer group members' coversheets and drafts at least twice, and (2) e-mail each writer your responses to all the questions below. You do not have to rewrite questions. Just number and write a response with a topic sentence that indicates your subject (e.g., My first reactions in reading this draft were. . .).**

01. Give the essay's title.
02. What were your reactions when first reading this draft?
03. What is the writer's purpose? How well does that purpose address the writing assignment?
04. What is the writer's role? Is that role appropriate for the purpose of the essay?
05. To what audience is the essay directed? Does the targeted audience address the assignment requirements?
06. Does the writer describe the audience sufficiently on the coversheet? If not, what else is needed?
07. List at least two examples that show how this essay appeals to the needs of this audience. Refer to specific tone, word choice, details included, format, and so forth.
08. What dominant impression of the profile subject does the essay make?
09. Is the dominant impression expressed or implied by a thesis? Is the thesis specific enough? If not, make suggestions for narrowing the focus.
10. Reread each paragraph, noting whether it is related to the thesis of the essay. Identify any paragraphs that do not seem to relate to the essay's thesis.
11. Comment on how well the writer has covered of the topic, discussing the who, what, where, when, how, and why of the profile?
12. List some of the most interesting information you learned about the subject.
13. List some of the information you found least interesting or off the subject of the profile.
14. Identify any information that confused you.
15. Identify points that needed more development.
16. Comment on the clarity and correctness of the writer's language and identify any technical terms that need defined.
17. Comment on the writer's use of sources (interview and publications): sufficient? clear? correctly documented?
18. Comment on the effectiveness of the opening paragraph to get the readers' attention, establish a dominant impression, and introduce the readers to the essay's perspective.
19. Comment on the effectiveness the closing paragraph to conclude the profile well, reinforcing the dominant impression of the profile subject and ending the essay smoothly.
20. Conclude your response with any other observations about the coversheet and draft not covered above.

Appendix 3

ESSAY COVERSHEET

***Instructions*: For each essay, complete a coversheet *after* you have written a discovery draft and then submit the coversheet with all subsequent drafts of the essay, revising the coversheet as needed if your approach to the essay changes. You may write on the back of this sheet if you need more room.**

1. In a word or phrase, describe your topic. _____

2. In a word or phrase, give your working title. _____

3. Complete the following sentence that tells why you are an insider on this subject; that is, what qualifies you to write on this subject.?

   I am an insider on this subject because

4. In two to four sentences complete the following, which should describe your target audience in specific terms: class, gender, race, age, educational level, geographical location and the like.

   My target readers are

   I have chosen this specific audience because

5. Complete the following statements that indicate (a) the purpose that you want to achieve in writing this essay for this specific audience and (b) the response you expect from this audience.

   My purpose in writing this essay is to

   I hope my audience will respond by

6. Complete the following sentence to indicate what value your essay holds for its readers.

   My readers will benefit from reading this essay by

7. In a word or phrase, identify the role you are playing as the author of this essay: Are you writing in your role as a university student, new parent, concerned citizen, dedicated worker, or what?

8. In a complete sentence, state your thesis. Be sure that this statement is the same thesis that appears in your essay.